

J O S H U A's ⁶

P I O U S

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D U T I E S O F F A M I L Y R E L I G I O N ,

A N D

H O U S E H O L D G O V E R N M E N T ,

E N F O R C E D .

His Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained
them not.

1 SAM. iii. 13.

BY JOHN MACGOWAN.

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M D C C L X X I I .

RESOLUTION

OF THE

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BY JOHN MACGOWAN

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FAMILY RELIGION.

Joshua xxiv. 15. *As for me and my house
we will serve the Lord.*

FAMILY religion is of very ancient, and no less extensive practice; to be traced back as far as the days of our great progenitors, in whose family the God of heaven was worshipped by sacrifice, as is pretty evident from the spoils of the beasts which they wore, as well as from the account we have of the several offerings made by Cain and Abel. From Adam down to *Joshua*, it is easy to trace it in the seed of the promise; but to them it was not confined; for, however misled the ancient Pagans were, in respect to the object and modes of their worship, this practice of worshipping God in families was pretty general amongst them, as most writers of antiquity do testify. *Homer*, both in his *Illiad* and *Odyssey*, and *Virgil* in the *Æneid*, make mention of household Gods held in great veneration by their contemporaries and predecessors, such, I suppose, as those which Rachael stole from her father Laban, and after which he made such grievous lamentation*. The retaining of *Teraphim*

* Gen. xxx. 30.

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images and household gods, shews, at least, that household worship was performed by the ancient Pagans, and that therefore they had more religion than many who call themselves Christians.

But, however moderns may reject the practice of worshipping God in their families; this good man, this * *Jesus* of the Old Testament, resolves and publishes his resolution, that the Lord should be served and worshipped in his family. After a recital of God's benefits to Israel, and the wonders which his hand had performed in their behalf, he reasons with them upon the propriety of serving the Lord on one hand, and the danger of rejecting his commandments on the other; may not my reader and me look back and survey the benefits received from the almighty Governor? What evils have been averted by his vigilance, and what deliverances his ever-watchful Providence has wrought for us though undeserving? And on the review we shall be obliged to say, "What hath God done? Is this the manner of man, O Lord?" We may also, without subjecting

* *Jesus of the Old Testament.* Such is the import of his name, and such the office to, which he was called; as the leader or Saviour of ancient Israel, by bringing them into Canaan, and appearing at their head in all their enterprizes and conquests.

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ourselves to the charge of legality, bring the matter laid before Israel home to ourselves, and ask, Whether or not we will serve the Lord? And if we will, whether we see it our duty, and are inclined to serve him in our houses with holy Joshua? For my own part, I do not see how church or congregational religion can long subsist, much less flourish, without a due regard being paid to family godliness. And, indeed, it is a rule almost universally observed, that those who neglect the worship of God in their families, are remiss in the duties of social religion, if not enslaved by temptation and sin.

Amongst those who are called Christians, two sets of men fall under the censure of scripture. 1. Such who totally neglect the service of God in their families. 2. Those who do not altogether neglect this duty, but are irregular and defective in regard to the manner in which it is performed.

I. Those who totally neglect the worship of God in their families, amidst all their pretensions to higher privileges than others enjoyed. If poor Pagans, from the law of nature, considered it as their duty to worship their supreme *Creator* in their houses; how culpable must they be, who, having the Bible in their hands, and gospel light

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light shining all around them, neglect to worship him, whose only providence doth make them houses, and fix their dwellings in a valley of vision.

1. But who in a Christian land do neglect the worship of God in their families? One would suppose that there are none such. But common observation shews us, that the prophane herd in general live, in this respect, without God; call not upon him, except to damn themselves and others. Awful prayer! And which, in the issue, may be answered. Many live from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, and even from year to year, without any manner of prayer and devotion at all. Others content themselves with a weekly attendance on public worship, without so much as the smallest traces of religion in their families, or regard paid to God, as the God of the families of Israel.

2. Many of the sensible, polite and civil, whose external deportment in other respects is lovely, join with the vulgar and prophane herd in slighting the God who made them, and class with those who call not upon his venerable name. These are amongst all denominations of people; for both Churchmen and Dissenters may be found, who live without the fear of God in their hearts, and his worship in their houses.

3. Some

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3. Some are yet, if possible, more inconsistent, and whilst they profess the assurance of faith, and pretend to have no fear of death and futurity, live altogether destitute of family religion and worship. But such people, whoever they are, give but a very slight, if any evidence at all, of the excellency of their faith, or even of its reality. They set a shocking example before their children and servants, instead of training them up in the way they should go, and are to them destroyers, instead of nursing-fathers, at whose hands the blood of their uncultivated children will be required in judgment. Such neglecters of family religion and godliness, give all possible reason for us to believe, that their hearts are unsound, and that all their religion is meer hypocrisy. I pity the children of such ungodly parents. I pity the servants, whose unhappy lot it is to dwell under their roofs.

Such heads of families are undoubtedly under that awful imprecation*. *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, and upon all the families that call not upon thy name.* Ranked along with heathens in spite of a lofty profession; exposed to the out-pourings of the divine fury, notwithstanding their pretensions to faith and its assurance. To blunt the edge of this scripture, some will tell

* Jer. x. 25.

you,

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you, that they call upon God privately, and so may the other branches of their families; so that they ought not to be ranked along with those who call not on the divine name. But they ought to know, that if every individual were at one instant of time to call on the name of the Lord, separately and apart, it can with no propriety be called family worship. A family cannot be said to call on the name of the Lord, but in its own proper capacity, in the convention of its members. But a backsliding heart will shelter itself from conviction, under any lying refuge whatever, and use the meanest subterfuges.

II. Some there be, who make conscience of the duties of family worship, and dare by no means give them up; who, notwithstanding, are very defective and irregular in the performance and spirit of them: This defect proceeds from hurry of business, or the want of a right plan of household government, rather than from any particular prevalency of an iniquitous or impious principle. And if I mistake not, ariseth chiefly from the following misconduct.

1. The deferring of morning prayer, till the world has laid hold of the heart, and the business of the day is fairly set in. What disadvantages this alone is attended with, let the man of business, the man of conscience

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conscience say, for he has experienced it. It were well, if before business is at all begun, this part of duty were embraced as a privilege, and the divine name were invoked early in the morning. This would prevent its being entirely omitted for the day, as sometimes is the case when deferred to a later hour. This would give opportunity to the whole family to assemble, which cannot afterwards be done, without encroaching upon the hours appointed to business; and we frequently find that one or other of the family, in most houses, are absent on that solemn occasion, when late and untimely.

2. Another thing very irregular in family worship is, referring it till late at night, when the body becomes sluggish and sleepy through the fatigues of the day; such a lassitude relaxes the whole frame, that the family may be said to come together to yawn, rather than to worship. Instead of kneeling, they stretch themselves to rest; instead of worshipping God with the heart, they are asleep, or else yawning out their amens. Masters are apt to blame their servants for sneaking privately to bed before family worship is begun, without reflecting, that their own disorder is the cause. And in my judgment, the laborious servant, who must be up in the morning

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ing to do his master's business, is more excusable in going to bed before family worship is over, than his master is in deferring it till an unseasonable hour. The master and mistress can indulge themselves a little in the morning, which is not the case of servants; and the calls of nature must be obeyed. If masters, therefore, were to study the health, vigour and activity of their servants, and the dispatch of their own business, they would see their families to rest in an early hour, utterly avoiding all late suppers and unseasonable visitings. How can it be thought that servants, having been up till twelve or one in the morning, can go about their business next day with that vigour and diligence, as if they had enjoyed their natural rest, and been in bed by ten over-night. Now,

III. In order to shew the importance and necessity of family religion, I shall point out some things which are to be ascribed to the want and neglect of it.

1. The ignorance of children untaught and unprincipled, left an easy prey to cunning papists, and other ministers of error, who lie in wait to deceive and to lead captive the unwary mind. And none so likely to become a prey, as the unhappy young ones, who are destitute of any settled principles. Parents cannot indeed give grace

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to their offspring; but by acting a consistent part may be of excellent use to them, in leading them externally into the way they should go, according to the divine direction. Many parents have had the pleasure of seeing their endeavours succeed to their utmost wishes, and many children have had reason to bless God for a religious education, under the inspection of their faithful parents.

2. Where family religion is totally neglected, or where worship is performed in a slight unmeaning manner, children and servants are led into a contempt of all religion, seeing no traces of its power in the spirits and conduct of their superiors. And can a worse thing be done for young ones in any capacity? If we sincerely sought their final ruin, could we take a more likely way to effect it; seeing children are so very prone to imitate whatever is vicious in their parents? Especially where the parent is under a profession of religion, the case is yet more fatally pernicious; as the young people will be naturally led to conclude, either that the heads of the family are hypocrites, or that there is, in reality, no weight or importance in religion itself.

3. Church-assemblies are disregarded, and church-encouragement is withheld. For the congegation of the faithful in a great measure, under God, depends for supplies

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supplies upon religious families; which families ought to be considered as nurseries for her special growth. But if the young plantation is entirely neglected; if the children of the godly are not taught to walk in the ways of the Lord externally, what but desolation is likely to befall the vineyard itself? O, what need have parents to be conscientious and circumspect before their children and servants? What need to resolve, through divine grace, with Joshua, that we and our houses will serve the Lord, that their blood be not required at our hands.

Give me leave now, my dear reader, to point out some things which seem to me naturally implied in Joshua's resolution, all of which are requisite to a godly form of household government.

1. It supposeth that *Joshua* had given, or would give, sound instruction to the various members of his family. For how shall they serve him of whom they have not heard? Him with whose will and law they are altogether unacquainted? The service of God necessarily implies an antecedent knowledge of his will. All service of the divine Being must be according to some certain rule or standard. We know of no rule besides his given word, which
parents

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parents and masters are commanded to open and expound to their children and servants.

It can never be deemed sufficient, that our children are taught to know our own will; apprentices taught their trades; and servants their proper business: after all these are done, one great lesson still remains to be learned, and that is the law of their God. That of Deut. vi. 6, 7. deserves the attention of all heads of families; "*These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt TEACH them DILIGENTLY unto thy children; thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*" What diligence is here required of masters of families? Considered under the notion of priests and prophets in the midst of their several households. A similar precept is given, or rather this is repeated in a more concise manner by Paul, the apostle*. *Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nature and admonition of the Lord.* So that if family religion was a duty under the law, it is not less so under the gospel. To which may be added, that parents and masters, being now under an higher dispensation, have

* Ephes. vi. 4.

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many advantages unknown to the patriarchal age; and the truths of God's gospel, in a more clear and ample manner, than were ever known to the Jewish church.

This divine precept was duly regarded by the faithful of old, who accordingly were careful and vigilant in the instruction of their children and servants, as appears from that in Psal. lxxviii. 2—8. “*I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter dark sayings of old; which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from our children, shewing to the generation to come, the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that THEY SHOULD make them known to their children. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, should arise and declare them unto their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.*” Such was the conduct of the Jewish fathers; how much more ought it to be the study of Christians, who are blessed with such superior advantages.

David, notwithstanding his foreign wars, and the weighty affairs of government
which

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which lay heavy upon him, neglected not this part of parental duty, as appears from Solomon's testimony *. "*Hear ye children the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake not you my law. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, let thine heart retain my words, keep my commandments and live. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not, neither decline from the words of my mouth.*" So DAVID taught Solomon his son, who, by his subsequent conduct, evidently shewed that instruction, had not been administered to him in vain; for, according to the advice of his holy parent, his whole heart was set upon getting wisdom and understanding. Eunice, mother of Timothy, is highly honoured by the apostolic pen, which records her assiduity in teaching her son, even from a child, the knowledge of the scriptures †. But alas! the ignorance of many of our children, betray the carelessness, and manifest the dishonour of the parents. Thus it appears, that when *Joshua* resolves to serve the Lord with his house, that he also resolves to instruct his household in the knowledge of his will whom they serve. A

* Prov. iv. 1—5.

† 2 Tim. iii. 15.

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2. Thing implied in this resolution is, a purpose properly to exert parental authority in his family, as under God its immediate governor. He who resolves to serve the Lord with his house, must first determine to command his family. Hence it is required of a bishop or pastor of a church, that he should “* *well rule his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.*” And if indispensibly necessary to that important office, it must certainly be very proper to all masters of families whatever. A man must look exceedingly mean and contemptible, who has not authority sufficient in his own family, to command all their attendance upon the worship of God. Though a parent cannot give grace to his children, nor a master to his servant, he may with propriety and justice insist on their presence and decent deportment in the worship of God.

When the master of a family quits the reins of domestic discipline, he introduceth the most fatal disorders into his household, and becomes accessary to the ruin of his children and dependants. The house of ELI seems to be hung up, as a flag of warning to all future parents, to caution them against loosing the reins of household government. “*His sons made themselves*

* Tim. iii. 4.

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vile, and he restrained them not;" on which account the severest judgments were inflicted on him and his *. A conscientious regard to this paternal duty, and good conduct in his numerous family, were some of the gems which embellished the character of faithful Abraham. "*For I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord* †." A remarkable proof of which we have in the case of ELIEZER of Damascus, who, although sprung from a Gentile stock, having long sojourned under Abraham's roof, gave the most illustrious proof of his unfeigned sanctity and fidelity, on his embassy to *Mesopotamia*. So true is it, that he who from a child bringeth up a servant as he ought to do, shall have him for a son at last.

Three things are to be observed, respecting domestic discipline, as indispensibly necessary.

1. It should be begun early; for it is more easy to bend the young and tender sapling, than the sturdy and inflexible oak. Seemingly apposite to my present purpose, I would present my reader with a quotation from a very great master of this subject ‡.

"The great mistake I have observed in

* 1 Sam. iii. † Gen. xviii. 19. ‡ Locke on Education, pag. 33, 34. edit. 9.

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“ peoples breeding of their children, has
 “ been, that care has not been taken in
 “ due season, to make the mind obedient
 “ to discipline, and pliant to reason, when
 “ at first it was most tender, and most easy
 “ to be bowed. Parents being wisely or-
 “ dained by nature to love their children,
 “ are very apt, if reason watch not that
 “ natural affection very warily, to let it run
 “ into fondness. They love their little
 “ ones, and it is their duty; but they of-
 “ ten, with them, cherish their faults too.
 “ They must not be crossed forsooth;
 “ they must be permitted to have their
 “ wills in all things: and by being in
 “ their infancy, not capable of great vices,
 “ the parents think they may safe enough
 “ indulge their little irregularities, and
 “ make themselves sport with their pretty
 “ perverseness, which they think well
 “ enough becomes that innocent age.”

“ The fondling must be taught to strike
 “ and call names, must have what he
 “ calls for, and do what he pleases. Thus
 “ parents, by humouring and cockering
 “ them when *little*, corrupt and viciate
 “ the principles of their children; and
 “ wonder afterwards to taste the bitter
 “ waters, although they themselves have
 “ poisoned the fountain. For when their
 “ children are grown up, and these ill
 “ habits

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“ habits along with them ; when they are
“ now too big to be dandled, and their
“ parents can no longer make use of them
“ as play-things ; then they complain that
“ the *brats* are untoward and perverse ;
“ then they are offended to see them wil-
“ ful, and are troubled with those ill hu-
“ mours which they themselves infused
“ and fomented in them ; and then, per-
“ haps, too late, would be glad to get out
“ those weeds which their own hands have
“ planted, and which now have taken too
“ deep root to be easily extirpated.”

“ For he that has been used to have his
“ will in every thing, whilst he was in
“ petticoats, why should we think it
“ strange that he should desire it, and
“ contend for it still when he is in breeches.
“ Indeed, as he grows towards a man,
“ age shews his faults the more ; so that
“ there be few parents then, so blind, as
“ not to see them ; few so insensible as
“ not to feel the ill effects of their own
“ indulgence. He had the will of his
“ maid before he could speak or go ; he
“ had the mastery of his parents ever since
“ he could prattle ; and why not now he
“ is stronger and wiser than he was then,
“ why now of a sudden must he be re-
“ strained and curbed. Why must he, at
“ seven, fourteen, or twenty years old,
“ lose

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“ lose the privilege, which the parents
 “ indulgence till then so largely allowed
 “ him? Try it on a dog, an horse, or
 “ any other creature, and see whether the
 “ ill and rusty tricks they have learned
 “ when young, are easy to be mended
 “ when they are knit? And yet none of
 “ those creatures are half so wilful and
 “ proud, or half so desirous to be masters
 “ of themselves and others as man.”

Continues this very sensible author,
 page 44. “ Those that intend ever to go-
 “ vern their children, should begin it
 “ when they are *very little*, and look that
 “ they perfectly comply with their pa-
 “ rents will. Would you have your son
 “ obedient to you when past a child? Be
 “ sure then to establish the authority of a
 “ parent as soon as he is capable of sub-
 “ mission, and can understand in whose
 “ power he is. If you would have him
 “ stand in awe of you, imprint it in his
 “ infancy; and as he approaches more to a
 “ man, admit him into nearer familiarity
 “ with you. So shall you have him your
 “ obedient subject whilst a child, and
 “ your affectionate friend when he is a
 “ man. Methinks they mightily misplace
 “ the treatment due to children, who are
 “ indulgent and familiar when they are
 “ little, but severe to them, and keep
 “ them

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“ them at a distance when they are grown
“ up. Liberty and indulgence can do no
“ good to children. Their want of judg-
“ ment makes them stand in need of re-
“ straint and discipline. And on the con-
“ trary, imperiousness and severity is but
“ an ill way of treating them when grown
“ up, and have reason of their own to
“ guide them. Parents should avoid this,
“ unless you have a mind to make your
“ children weary of you, and secretly to
“ say within themselves, *Father, I wish*
“ *you were dead.*”

It is the opinion of some, and I could almost side with them, that if a child does not learn submission before he is two years of age, it is much if he ever learns it at all; therefore, as Mr. Locke observes, he that would govern his children at all, must begin with the earliest dawn of reason.

2. Discipline should be constantly maintained without relaxation, as well as be begun by times. Notwithstanding David well knew this part of paternal duty, it is clear to a demonstration, that his family suffered by his frequently being absent in foreign wars; which, I doubt not, was one principal cause of the disorders he complains of on his death-bed. There should not, at any time, be the least abatement of the parents authority on one hand,
nor

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nor of the child's obedience and submission on the other. In the duties of family religion there ought to be no interruption. Nothing whatever ought to be suffered to break in upon those sacred moments, or to turn aside the duty. As the least neglect on the part of the parent, lessens the importance of the thing itself in the estimation of the child. Children reason upon, and draw conclusions from the conduct of their parents, much sooner, and more striking than most parents are aware of. I knew a man, then in a state of widowhood, who received one of the most severe reproofs he ever met with, from an infant of three years old. Family prayer had been, by some means, neglected on a certain morning, the little child was, as it were, out of his element all the morning; fuddled about the knee of his father, as if he had something to say that he was afraid to utter. At last, when the family were going to sit down to dinner, this little reprover leaning on his parent's knee, fetched a sigh, and said, "*Pa—you were used to go to prayer with us; but you did not to day.*" "No, my dear, said the parent, I did not." "But papa, you ought; why did you not?" In short, the father had not a word to reply; and this infant minister's rebuke, was as home, and as effectual,

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tual, as if it had been administred by the most respectable prelate in the land; and it may be added, I trust, had as permanent an influence.

3. A proper medium between the over fond and doting parent on one hand, and the tyrannical governor on the other, ought to be observed. As over fondness and indulgence, have a very baleful influence upon the morals of young ones, so in like manner tyranny and severity have their peculiar evils cleaving to them. The lazy, the short and ready way of the tyrant to procure subjection in his children and dependants, by the whip, rod, cane, and ferula, may procure the subjection of a slave, but has not the least tendency to conquer the vicious propensities of young ones. It is possible to make even play itself disagreeable to young ones, and it soon would be so, if every mistake they made was to be punished with a rod; hence it follows, that an undesigned mistake, made by young ones, or any little unhappy accident falling out in their hands, should not even be reprov'd; or meet with so much as a chiding. The design and spirit of their conduct are the objects of our proper regard, and when these are right, the conduct itself, however faulty, must be pass'd by. Reproof and correction for what was quite involuntary, and perhaps unavoidable,

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unavoidable, must produce a timorous dejection and incapacity for business. Besides, giving too much opportunity to the child, to see that the parent in inflicting of punishment, is not guided by reason but by passion; and that it was not so much the good of the child that was aimed at, as to give scope to revenge and boundless anger, so unbecoming the parent. For this reason a parent ought never to correct a child, but when he has the most perfect command of himself; nor should the least degree of anger ever be discovered, or indeed, be felt on the occasion; for if the child has but the notion that you only vend your own anger instead of seeking his good, your whipping labour is altogether lost; and he is hardened instead of being reformed.

The *Scylla* of over fondness, and the *Charibdis* of severity and tyranny, are equally to be guarded against, as equally dangerous to the principles of young ones. The tyrant may gain fear from his dependants, but unhappily their hatred of him arises in an equal proportion to their fear. This is what a wise man would wish by all means possible to avoid; and indeed for a parent to render himself the object of his childrens hatred, is something extremely shocking. On the other hand, that parent

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or master who lays aside his authority, and ceaseth to rule in his own proper department, becomes the object of just contempt. It is as much the duty of the parent to command, as it is the duty of the child to obey; and so closely is the mutual happiness of each linked, with their acting properly in their different departments, that it is not to be expected, but in an exertion of themselves in parental authority on one hand, and in filial submission on the other. Happy is that parent who is feared because he is beloved, obeyed cheerfully, because of the equity and reasonableness of his commands. Happy is he who has attained Bathshebah's address in tutoring her son Solomon*. *What my son! And what the son of my womb! And what the son of my vows! Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. It is not for kings, O Lemuel! It is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink.* Here to give force to her injunction, she gives a full scope to maternal tenderness, and addresseth her son as if part of herself. And indeed it appears not that the rod and reproof are likely to give wisdom, unless manifestly influenced by the bowels of parental affection.

* Prov. xxxi. 2-5.

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3. *Joshua's* resolution it seems implied, that he was not only the prince of his family, in a way of authoritative command, but their pattern, by way of example; for he puts himself at the head of his house in the worship and service of his God. *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* Preceptive authority is utterly useless, and in some cases even hurtful, if not enforced by consistent example. If otherwise, how readily will our dependants retort upon us, "*Physician heal thyself.*" *Thou that teachest others, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, by breaking the law dishonourest thou God?* And how preposterous? How absurd must our admonition appear, when this is the case? It is something like unto a drunken man rebuking prophane swearing.

Parents, and masters of families in general, have need to resolve with that servant of God, Psalm ci. 2. *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; O when wilt thou come unto me (to enable me so to do.) I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes;*

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eyes; I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. A forward heart shall depart from me (lest it should corrupt my household.) I will not know a wicked person (for fear he should be a snare to me.)

Command, instruction, and even the rod itself will all be in vain, without a suitable example. Abraham commanded his house, but he led it also by holy example. Abraham will command his house *after him*, to walk in his ways, or to follow his example. How inconsistent would it be for you to command your children to worship God, if you yourself did not lead them in the way. To tell your little ones that they must pray to God, whilst you leave them in the dark, about whether you yourself do actually pray; or what is the same thing, never pray with them. For if you never pray with your children, they can have no certain proof of your praying for them. Meanness of your abilities is but a sorry excuse for this neglect, for children are very incompetent judges of them; and moreover, gifts are like the talents of a tradesman, which grow by being used.

Now those who will *still* neglect the worship of God in their houses, and will

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live without family religion, may indeed number themselves amongst the Redeemer's people, flatter themselves in a * baseless hope, and consider themselves as separated from the world; but the scriptures rank them along with the heathen, and denounce vengeance against them. Awful it is to feed upon the transient hope of the hypocrite. Awful to cry to our own souls, *peace, peace*, when in reality the heart is at war with the God of the families of Israel. On the other hand, you who, notwithstanding your many and great discouragements, dare not depart from Joshua's resolution; you who, altho' frequently humbled under a sense of its imperfections, dare not disuse the worship of God in your families; mean and contemptible as you consider yourselves, the scripture sets you in a very respectable point of view. The holy Bible ranks you with Daniel, with Moses and Joshua; with Jacob and Noah, with Enoch, and with Abraham the friend of God; yea, with all who, from the beginning, have walked with him in righteousness and true holiness. Ye tread in the footsteps of those, who through faith and patience now inherit the promised blessing.

* *Baseless*, without foundation.

Permit

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Permit me now, in drawing towards a conclusion, to address myself to children and servants. Consider my young friends, that ye, notwithstanding your green and tender years, are the subjects of reasonable and never-dying souls. Souls that must for ever exist in a state unspeakably happy and glorious, or inconceivably wretched and miserable. Ye are accountable beings, and must be judged according to the deeds done in the body, be they good or evil. Yes, my young reader, you must stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, undergo the strict scrutiny of infinite holiness, and receive your doom from him, who cannot connive at iniquity. How dreadful will your case be then, if not found at the right hand of the judge? If ranked amongst the reprobate race?

When rising from the bed of death,
O'erwhelm'd with guilt and fear;
You view your Maker face to face,
O how will you appear?

How indeed! shall you face an offended God. How will ye be able to endure the presence of a slighted and contemned Redeemer? How will ye bear that dreadful irrevocable sentence, "depart from me ye cursed, &c?" How will ye dwell with

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everlasting flames ? How can you endure unquenchable burnings ? Yet these things must be experienced by all who are strangers to the grace of Jesus : by all who die in a state of unbelief and impenitence. It is good, therefore, that you remember your Creator in the days of your youth ; and that by times you enquire after the good old way, the only way of salvation.

You may very probably be impatient under the strictness of family government, and be offended with parental reproof ; you may conclude that your parents give themselves more trouble about you than is necessary. But let me intreat you a little to consider the obligations they are under, and you will see that they dare not do otherwise than restrain you from evil, and set before you life and immortality, with all its charming attractions, on one hand, and death, with all its gloomy horrors, on the other.

Your parents are particularly entrusted by Providence with your education : and God hath made it their duty to train you up in his nurture and admonition. When you were born into the world, God said unto your parents, "*Take these children, and nurse them up for me ; and at your hands will I require them ;* therefore, if they warn you not against evil ; if they reprove you
not

FAMILY RELIGION. 31

not for, and do what they can to restrain you from sin; yea, if they correct you not for your stubbornness and wilful rebellion, they partake of your sin, and become necessary to your destruction. The spring of that awful ruin which God brought upon the house of *Eli*, was, "*his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*" Happy for him and his family had it been, if he had maintained the authority of a father over his children, and exerted himself as the governor in his family.

It is very reasonable to suppose, that your parents and masters may know more of the vanities and snares of this world than you do, and that therefore your conduct should be in a great measure directed by their discretion. Indeed nothing discovers the maturity of filial wisdom more, than a readiness in the child to submit to the knowledge and authority of the parent. Moreover, God has been pleased to select from all mankind, your parents, as your proper tutors and governors; and consequently, so far as their advice or commands are agreeable with the scripture, to reject them is the same as to reject God himself. Let the children of religious parents consider the goodness of God to them, in placing them under the direction and government of parents who really seek
their

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their everlasting welfare; whose daily care is to bring them to the throne of grace, and solicit covenant blessings for them. To see an *Ismael* brought up in the house of Abraham, despising godliness; an *Esau* educated by Isaac, contemning covenant blessings, hath something more shocking in its appearance, than any thing in the rebellion of others. Let every young reader consider, that if a religious godly education is not blessed to your conversion and reformation, it cannot fail of making you more the children of Satan than you could have been without it; of aggravating your guilt, and procuring for you more intolerable dungeons in the regions of the damned. But if your parents are happily made the instruments of your conversion; if they are honoured with training you up for God; with what rapturous pleasure, with what extatic joy will you meet them at the coming of the Lord. Then will you bless God for a religious education, and that he graciously put you under the care of those that feared his name. With what unspeakable, transporting delight will they and you spend a vast, an endless eternity, where there is fulness of incomprehensible beatitude, and inexpressible pleasure for ever more?

Bear

FAMILY RELIGION. 33

Bear with me, my reader, whilst I address myself to such members of gospel churches, if any such there be, who neglect the worship of God in their families, and who may therefore very properly be said to live without God in the world. Your neglect of a practice so commendable is dishonouring to your Maker, and injurious to yourselves and families. You appear, indeed, in the congregation of worshippers on the solemn day, and assume the appearance of Christians; but alas! there is nothing in the family which distinguisheth it from that of the merest Pagan. The heads of the family have no communion at the throne of grace, the servants have no example of piety set before them, the children are not trained up in the way they should go; they are left unprincipled, the ready prey of darkness and error. Awful case! if found in the family of a professor of religion.

You will perhaps alledge your bashfulness and want of courage in excuse for your neglect. But this is in the highest degree absurd and preposterous. Is it a shame for a needy sinner to bow the knee to the Father of spirits? A shame for the perishing beggar to solicit an alms? This shame is unwarrantable and impious; it betrays an heart turned aside from God to the

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the creature; as it is not the divine presence of which you are ashamed, but the presence of your fellow mortals. Were it the divine presence of which you were ashamed, you would blush in private the same as in public; and this very shame would issue in your enlargement, rather than in your embarrassment. Your business in prayer is solely with that God who searches the heart of man; with that God who is the judge of all; consequently your fear of your fellow creatures is impious in his sight. It is the heart that God requires, and where the heart is lifted up unto him, you may be very easy with regard to the manner in which you express yourselves, as it is not the labour of the lips, but the language of the heart that meets with divine acceptance. In a word, no excuse whatever, no not even conscious guilt upon the heart, will justify this sinful neglect of family religion. May that God, who is worthy to be praised in all the families of his people, enable my reader and me to resolve with holy Joshua, that we and our houses will serve the Lord.

F I N I S.

P. S. The author frankly acknowledgeth that he is indebted to former writers, for some of the foregoing remarks on this important subject.

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